

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2019

LTG Todd T. Semonite
Commanding General and Chief of Engineers
Headquarters
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20314-1000

Dear Lieutenant General Semonite:

We strongly urge your immediate attention to significant and ongoing concerns with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' failure to comply with the law authorizing the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Storage Reservoir. It has been conveyed by numerous sources that the Corps does not anticipate completion of the final feasibility report necessary to begin design and construction of the project until May 2020 at the earliest. This delay is simply unacceptable and represents a blatant disregard for congressional directives and intent.

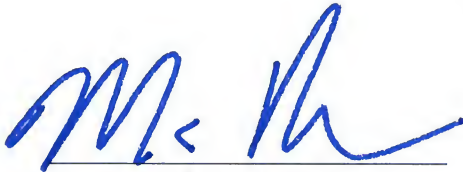
As you are aware, the EAA Storage Reservoir project was authorized as part of the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) Post Authorization Change Report (PACR) in Sec. 1308 of the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-270). The congressional authorization directed the Army Corps to expedite a report on the project, and to have it completed "not later than 90 days after the date of enactment." Today marks one year since the law's enactment, and as of today, the Corps is nine months late in addressing the concerns, recommendations, and conditions necessary to inform a final feasibility report from the Secretary.

The Corps bureaucracy has become an impediment to both the Jacksonville District's relationship with nonfederal sponsors and the administration's implementation of national policies. The South Florida Water Management District and the State of Florida have accelerated completion of their responsibilities surrounding the planning and design of this critical project with little support from their federal partner, as also occurred during the development of the Section 203 CEPP PACR report. Moreover, in a December 14, 2018 response to our original inquiry into this matter, Secretary James committed to us that his office would work with your agency "to identify ways to expedite the required tasks." However, despite his efforts, it is not clear that the Corps has implemented any efficiencies to assist the expedited completion of the report.

The Corps' apparent disregard for directives issued by Congress and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works also directly undermines President Trump's efforts to expedite critical infrastructure projects and reduce red tape. Given the administration's significant investment in Everglades restoration through the president's updated \$200 million FY20 budget request, it is imperative that the design and construction of the EAA Storage Reservoir not be delayed any further as a result of bureaucratic mismanagement.

We are confident that the federal-state partnership to restore the Everglades can succeed with sustained commitments from all partners. We request an updated timeline for completion of the final report, including a description of outstanding issues remaining to be resolved, to be provided to our offices and presented at next week's South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force meeting in Washington, D.C.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Brian Mast
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable R. D. James
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